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TAGS: [TIP](#) [DRL](#) [NEA](#) [RA](#) [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [ELAB](#)
SUBJECT: TIP IN IRAQ: DIVISION AND MOMENTUM

Classified By: Political Counselor Yuri Kim for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Discussions with Government of Iraq (GOI) officials, as well as political developments, indicate that trafficking in persons (TIP) remains a divisive topic, but one whose profile is rising. Recent movement on the GOI's anti-trafficking draft legislation has emboldened various NGOs, politicians, and GOI entities to decry inaction and indifference to TIP. Embassy Baghdad intends to encourage increasing attention to build support for passage of TIP legislation after the March 7 election. End summary.

CONFLICTING DIPLOMATIC NOTES CAUSE A STIR

12. (C) In July, 2009, after the publication of the 2009 Trafficking in Persons Report for Iraq, the Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) responded to Embassy Baghdad with a diplomatic note in which the GOI highlighted its actions to address the issue. The note stressed the seriousness with which Iraq views its cooperation and coordination efforts with regional and international players to fight human trafficking in Iraq. In January, 2010, Embassy received a second diplomatic note that, contradicting the tone and substance of the July 2009 diplomatic note, decried the methods used by the USG in producing the 2009 TIP Report and stated that "...no human trafficking crime has been officially reported in Iraq to justify accusing the government of negligence in taking the necessary actions" to comply with minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. Poloffs spoke with contacts at the MOHR, including the Minister of Human Rights, and ascertained that this second diplomatic note was the work of one specific GOI official who took exception to the 2009 TIP report. These contacts also stated that the GOI's interagency trafficking committee had not provided input or clearance for the second note.

13. (C) The Minister of Human Rights told Poloff in early February that the second diplomatic note was "very unprofessional" and that the MOHR had refused to sign it. She added that she planned to write a letter to the Council of Ministers to invalidate the second diplomatic note. The release of the second diplomatic note reveals the highly divergent views on TIP held by GOI entities, as well as the divisive nature of the trafficking issue in political circles. We assess the sentiments expressed in the second diplomatic note do not reflect prevailing GOI thinking on TIP issues, although it likely captures an undertone of GOI bureaucratic resistance to progress on trafficking, possibly based on conservative religious views. Strong advocacy, both by MOHR officials as well as NGOs and key COR members, has established significant, if occasionally stymied momentum on this issue.

INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE TACKLES TIP

14. (C) Along with the development of anti-trafficking

draft legislation, an interministerial committee to combat human trafficking was established to serve as a point of contact for all matters related to human trafficking. MOHR Director Saad Fattehallah, who chairs the group, told Poloff that he anticipated the draft legislation would be passed after the March, 2010 elections. He did not foresee "political obstacles" hindering passage of the bill, and believed the interministerial committee was prepared to lobby for enough funds to implement an ambitious catalogue of prevention, protection, and prosecution-related initiatives to combat trafficking in Iraq. Fattehallah said the Qto combat trafficking in Iraq. Fattehallah said the Committee had redoubled its efforts to work in tandem with GOI ministries to develop and disseminate public awareness programming on TIP, focused on youth centers and school groups. These efforts were partly a response to a perceived lack of understanding and education on trafficking among the Iraqi public.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE SHARES VIEWS ON TIP

15. (C) MP Nada Ibrahim, who serves on the Women's Committee, told Poloff that until a few years ago, shelters assisting women who were raped or sexually exploited, often as a result of being trafficked, were frequent targets of terrorist attacks. While there was still much progress to be made on educating the public about human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, attitudes towards TIP-related violence and providing assistance to victims of gender based violence were evolving. "Now is the time to make progress on this issue," she concluded.

16. (C) At the same time, MP Ibrahim related that some GOI officials could not overcome their personal and religious beliefs about trafficking to view TIP as a political issue. She recounted a conversation with Women's Committee Chairwoman Sameera Al-Mousawi, who walked off the stage in the middle of a televised interview with Yanar Mohammed, an NGO activist, regarding female victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking. Ibrahim remembered that when she confronted Mousawi after the incident and asked her why she did not acknowledge the situation of female victims of trafficking as a political issue, Mousawi had responded by declaring that these women were "prostitutes who must die." Ibrahim lamented that some GOI officials who might otherwise help Iraq make progress on TIP harbored strong personal beliefs that precluded their objective consideration of human trafficking as a political issue. Despite the presence of these individuals in key positions of influence, Ibrahim and other activists within the GOI were willing to champion the issue, she emphasized.

17. (C) COMMENT: While the upcoming March 7 election will undoubtedly change political dynamics in Iraq, momentum to address TIP and related issues appears to be growing within elements of the GOI. At the very least, this momentum will result in healthy debate of the anti-trafficking draft legislation later this year. Post will continue to track and report on how post-election changes in key GOI areas, such as the Ministry of Human Rights and the Women's Committee, affect the direction of these evolving discussions and attitudes about trafficking in persons in Iraq. END COMMENT
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